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ABSTRACT

Eliciting creativity in every student in the classroom can be a realistic goal for classroom teachers. The teaching of creativity embraces form and structure as well as freedom of thought and expression. It is very appropriate to provide the student with an imaginative and creative impetus with which he/she cannot only create or establish the frame for his/her own life, but supply the tools for the painting of the picture of life. Spontaneous art can be used to activate the imagination--there are no rules and there is no instruction. Risk-taking is a very important factor in order to develop cognitive skills. Divergent thinking skills, where the child can develop different avenues of learning, becomes a supportive factor in teaching the creative child. Creative drama in the classroom can be a useful tool in developing creativity and imagination. Visualizing and imaging are used almost simultaneously while various exercises are used. The difficulty, however, of allowing the creative mind to grow and develop in a world where values are very linear has posed problems for years. The paradox lies somewhere in the process where the rules are so strict that children replace their creativity for social acceptance. (Contains 14 references.) (NKA)

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Encouraging Creativity and Imagination in the Classroom

by Lorie A. Annarella

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ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Eliciting creativity in every student in the classroom can be a realistic goal for classroom teachers. Many teachers envision that the teaching of creativity will produce a classroom of undisciplined and rowdy students. Actually, just the opposite is true. Structure is the basic form in which our society has long lived. Without basic structure, our lives within a society would be in great strife. Children then, must be taught to function within the bounds of organization and structure. Children have always been taught to function within these bounds. Form and structure becomes essential to the developmental process to cognitive learning.

The teaching of creativity embraces form and structure as well as freedom of thought and expression. We live within the framework of our lives. Each person is responsible for the creation of the frame of his or her own life. How important it becomes then, to supply the tools necessary to create that frame. Howard Worner (Carnegie Mellon University), an artist and teacher, has often discussed the importance of utilizing the four corners of any canvas. There are limits, therefore, within our lives. It is very appropriate then to supply the student with an imaginative and creative impetus with which he or she can not only create or establish the frame for his or her own life, but to supply the tools for the painting of the picture of life. So life then, can be a living picture. One that becomes very personalized and stylized and unique. In order to create one must have a plan, form and structure. Developing imaginative and creative abilities can contribute greatly to this process.

Imagination is the greatest source of creativity. If someone asks you how the weather is today, you have to think of what it was like when you were outside. If it is raining you would have to feel the raindrops in your imagination. You would have to see the clouds in the sky in

your mind's eye or in your imagination. In this way we use our imagination everyday. "Imagination creates things that can be or can happen whereas fantasy invents things that are not in existence, which never have been or will be. When fantasy created the Flying Carpet, who could have thought that one day we would be winging our way through space? Both fantasy and imagination are indispensable to a painter." (Stanislavski, p. 52) In An Actor Prepares, the correlation between acting and painting as a cognitive process parallel each other. Both are considered processes that are calling upon the creative state of the mind. In creating, a painter goes to his canvas and colors, an actor turns to his mind, will and feelings. The mobilization of all these inner elements creates a vast network for the production of artistic form for both. Line is very important to the artist. It is of equal importance to the actor. The actor studies, interprets, and delivers the written lines of a play; the painter applies line to create a visualization of an idea.

Spontaneous art can be used to activate the imagination. There are no rules and there is no instruction. Mixing of paint and introduction to form is not taught. Somehow the concentration on what is being drawn or painted releases energy. The unconscious takes over and helps with the release of energy. Feeling becomes a reality. Ideas and feelings and emotions take on a form. Therefore, these feelings and emotions and ideas become real. "It is the language of feeling and emotion. No one should doubt the importance of being in touch with our emotional life which so often determines success and failure in our ventures." (Bennet, p. 112) Much of Jung's work reflects on feelings. Feelings guided by the imagination, Jung believes, produces concrete works.

It is interesting to note that for many years the development of creative and imaginative skills was not advocated in the general classroom. In some academic situations today this type of

thinking is still advocated. To begin with, highly creative people are not the easiest people to live with. They constantly are prone to ideas and many creative and imaginative people like to act on their ideas as quickly as possible. These types of people are almost always individualists. The individualist is an adventurer. If he/she follows any system, it will be his/her own. He/she has a tendency not to plan activities, but he/she waits for developments, and changes plans quickly. He/she thinks of people as individuals; is tolerant and open-minded and had faith in the goodness of people as individuals. These are some of the results of the early work of Kenyon Runner. They characterize some of the attributes of the individualist. (Torrance, p. 72-73)

Risk-taking is a very important factor in order to develop cognitive skills. It is important to ask questions in order to seek answers. Yet, today in the classroom there is still too much emphasis placed on the correct question for the student to ask. By questioning, the student is trying to stretch his or her world. Curiosity is a very wonderful practice. Yet for years we taught that "curiosity killed the cat; that to be too curious can be harmful." (P.74) It is important that the inherent curiosity in the student be not only satisfied, but encouraged.

Creativity in children, Torrance found as Howard Gardner (1982) did, many times becomes lost in adulthood. Torrance was interested in finding out about the environment of the child so that he might be able to discern at what point that the creative child's attitude turns away from creativity.

The family pattern of creative children was established by Weisberg and Springer. They discovered that the family unit was not an extremely close one. There was little stress on conformity to the values of the parents. There was not always a well adjusted marriage. The mother and father interacted well with the child. The mother was sometimes ambivalent to the

role as mother. The parents accepted regressive behavior of the child without any problems. The creative child was not necessarily the favored child.

Highly creative children are reputed to have wild and silly ideas. They can produce ideas that are "off the beaten track, outside the mold." They use unusual details, and their art work is full of nonessentia. details. Their work is filled with playfulness and humor. (Torrance, p. 78) The rigidity of standardized testing is of little consequence to the creative child. In the creative child, the thinking process always goes on. He/she always has an idea. The idea may not always be acted out, but nevertheless, the cognitive wheels are always turning. The unpredictability of the creative child can also make his/her life more complicated, since many times their personalities can be an upsetting factor for the group.

Parents of highly creative children focus their values on openness to the child's experiences, intrinsic worth, and enthusiasm and interest. Creative children and adolescents are prone to risk-taking. They seem to enjoy discovering the unknown. "In a study by Hammer (1961) it was found that the 'truly creative' differed from the 'merely faciles' in that they exhibited deeper feelings, greater original responsiveness, preference for the observer role over the participant role, stronger determination and ambition, integration of feminine and masculine components, greater independence, rebelliousness, and self-awareness, stronger needs for selfexpression, greater tolerance for discomfort, and a fuller range of emotional expression." (Torrance, p. 82)

Since the creative child finds it difficult to harness energy into everyday tasks, he/she is many times looked at to be a poor student or a discipline problem, or even sometimes lazy. The creative child can then become withdrawn or rebellious. It is most important not to break the

spirit of this type of student. A creative child cannot be forced to learn in many of the conventional ways that the non-creative child learns. Sometimes the creative child prefers to learn on his own. He/she is investigative and searching in their learning. Divergent thinking skills, where the child can develop different avenues of learning, become a supportive factor in teaching the creative child.

Creative Drama in the classroom can be a useful tool in developing creativity and imagination. The excitement of building new lines of understanding and self expression lends itself to the use of improvisation. Visualizing and imaging are used almost simultaneously while various exercises are used. The use of the fantasy trip (Polsky, p.8) is a very effective way to have each student get in touch with his/her imagination. While engaging in the fantasy, the student can learn to accept the visualization his mind's eye has developed for him. He/she can create his/her own fantasy situation within the bounds of the fantasy guide. It is in these types of situations that the student can be not only creative, but can also be in tune with emotions and intuition.

"Discovery consists of looking at the same thing as everyone and thinking something different." (Von Oech, p.7) There are definite suppositions that have been formed about what a person is supposed to do and what a person is not supposed to do in terms of cognitive and creative thinking. Roger von Oech discusses "Mental Locks." They are as follows:

1. The Right Answer
2. That's Not Logical
3. Follow the Rules
4. Be Practical
6. To Err is Wrong
7. Play is Frivolous
8. That's Not My Area
9. Don't Be Foolish

5. Avoid Ambiguity 10. I'm Not Creative

He sets about stating that we must get rid of our attitude that to be different is not allowed. If we are going to use our imagination we have to learn to trust our imagination. He does create an interesting and wildly imaginative search for us to find our own creativity. The mental locks soon become unlocked and the reader can peek into a world of his/her own imagination. Discussion of soft and hard thinking united with the creative process helps one to understand that the process of ideas versus practicality can operate in unison with each other.

This idea of both practicality and creativeness operating in unison is also the subject of Betty Edward's, Drawing on the Artist Within and Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain.

It is Edward's belief that drawing can be taught as a basic skill, just as reading and mathematics are taught. She is of the firm belief that perceptual skills can be used to enhance thinking skills. She also proposes, through a series of innovative drawing and visualization techniques, that perceptual skills can be taught. There is much discussion about L-Mode, the left hemisphere of the brain-the creative part and R-Mode, the right hemisphere of the brain-the analytical part. Edwards proposes that teaching should not negate the R-Mode hemisphere. Almost all teaching today, as in the past, has been aimed at the education of the L-Mode hemisphere. There should be more teaching strategies that can compensate the R-Mode hemisphere, both then could be equally compensated and learning would then become a more unified entity.

There has been much interest in creativity and imagination through the years. The difficulty of allowing the creative mind to grow and develop in a world where values are very linear has proposed problems for years. The emphasis on the Arts as a viable contribution to

society has always been embraced. The paradox lies somewhere in the process where we have made the rules so strict that children replace their creativity for social acceptance. We must then, teach our children that to be creativ e and diffcrent is to be truly outstanding and wonderful.

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